

# DOVER FIFTY YEARS AGO

FRANK SMITH

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# DOVER FIFTY YEARS AGO

By

FRANK SMITH

I want to give a picture of Dover before the advent of radio, automobiles, telephone and electric lights. I cannot go back to the time when the residents "just lived and loved, and worked and laughed and cried" but I can remember when every farm was tilled and most of the residents gained a living from the soil.

Within my memory most farmers had not only a large field of corn but separate fields of rye, oats and barley. While in harvesting rye the cradle was in general use, yet I remember seeing Allen Norton, father of the late Rev. T. S. Norton, reaping rye on my father's farm with a sickle in the early sixties. Perhaps this was the last time that this ancient instrument was used on a Dover farm. Rye was eaten in the family as a cereal, rye hasty pudding with New Orleans molasses was a wholesome and palatable dish, which often alternated at breakfast with fried corn meal mush. The early New England settlers learned to eat corn mush from the Indians, who ate it with a syrup made from the cattails which grew in the swamps. Oats were grown either to mature for horses, or to be cut green for foddering cows. Barley was used for swine and was ground with the cracked corn and cob, at the nearest mill, and thus thoroughly mixed for feeding. To meet the necessity for grinding grain, grist mills were numerous. I recall Sawin's mill at South Natick, Holbrook's mill at South Sherborn, Morse's mill at Little South Natick, Kingsbury's mill at Medfield, and Harding's mill at Medfield Junction. Newell's mill at Charles River was used by the farmers at Dover Center, also by those who lived in the

East part of the town. Residents of South Dover took their grists to a mill which stood where the old stone mill now stands on the Medfield road leading to Westwood. The miller often took his pay in toll, for which purpose he kept a set of measures at hand, by which to measure the required amount of grain which the farmer gave in lieu of cash.

There was fun for the boys in going to the blacksmith's shop as well as the mill. In those days the blacksmith was an all round man who could shoe a horse or ox, set the farmer's wagon tires, iron a carriage, rivet a shaft, or weld a broken cow chain. Today many country towns are in as much need of a blacksmith as were the early Colonial towns which offered special inducements to the blacksmith to settle among them. Several families in Dover were the kinsmen of Dexter Pratt, Longfellow's "village blacksmith," who was a native of Sherborn.

Large crops of potatoes were raised and the quantity greatly increased by a frequent change in seed. The "Jackson white" was the favorite variety—with the "Ladies finger" for baking. The "Shenango" was a variety early grown and imported from Nova Scotia, the seed potatoes being taken directly from the boat in Boston.

Henry Ford has recently referred to what I was taught and every farmer's son was taught, namely, that in sorting a pile of apples or potatoes always begin at the bottom. Mr. Ford says: "One of the first things my father taught me was to begin at the bottom, or at one end of the pile, and take the potatoes as they come. When you go at it in this way you

get them all in time. You don't have to worry about those at the top, eventually they will fall right into your hands." A statement that is absolutely true.

While the Pokanoket Club is paying \$15.50 a ton for coal, Amos W. Shumway, who previously owned this farm, as did his father before him, cut on the farm wood lot, as did all other farmers in the town, all the fuel used in their households. The big wood pile containing a year's supply of wood, which had been carefully worked up during the Spring months, is especially remembered on this farm, although it was characteristic of most Dover farmers. During the Summer the wood was carefully housed in the wood shed, and as evenly piled as cord wood. Those farmers, however, who thought that dry wood burned too freely, filled their sheds with cords of the clearest pine wood which was used in kindling the green wood fire. Every night a bushel basket was filled with shavings and carefully split pine wood, which was used in building the fire next morning. This chore was never neglected and many a country boy was trained to habits of care and thoroughness through its daily performance. This was my job on my father's farm and I well understood that it was never to be neglected, although the shavings had to be made with a draw shave each day and the wood carefully split. With the introduction of the air-tight stove, peat, of which there are good deposits in Dover, came into use. In the Spring peat was cut in the meadows into bars about two feet long with the peat knife. (A picture of such a knife, used for many years on the Chickering homestead, is given in the Narrative History of Dover.) The bars of peat were piled cob house fashion about two feet high and allowed to dry during the summer. In the fall it was housed and burned during the winter months. A peat

meadow north of Haven street was divided into acre lots about 1830 and sold at public auction. One of these lots purchased by my grandfather, Isaac Howe, is still held by his heirs. I am old enough to remember at Thanksgiving the turkey roasted on the spit before the open fire and the Dutch oven in which were baked cream of tartar biscuits, which once in a while took the place of raised bread in my mother's household. The faggots, made by my father, were burned in the brick oven preparatory to baking pots of beans, brown bread and a goodly supply of pies. In the fall the most perfect pumpkins were selected and baked in the brick oven, the pulp to be taken out with a wooden spoon and eaten in bowls of the richest milk. I still remember the long handled wooden shovel which was used in taking the pies out of the oven.

The cranberry bogs through neglect are now overgrown and no longer yield their fruit which was once carefully gathered and often sold in the Boston market for \$20 a barrel. The larger harvests were gathered on the river farms in the west part of the town. The decline in the cranberry crop on Dover farms is probably due to the cultivation of more marketable varieties on Cape Cod. On every river farm there was a "cranberry board" (and if a modern one) it had a wire screen in the middle on which the cranberries were received and assorted for the market. The board was heaped high with the winnowed berries, which as they passed to the first gate were carefully screened, removing all sticks, stems, and shriveled berries. An attendant at the second gate carefully removed all soft and decayed berries and passed them on to the last gate where they were carefully inspected and all white or imperfectly colored berries removed, as they rolled into the barrel in which they were sold. In those days farmers

had to depend upon flour barrels, for the shipment of their fruit, which were picked up in Boston, or at stores in the vicinity. As some barrels held from a peck to a half bushel more than others, every farmer had a "barrel measure" which he applied and so selected the smallest barrels in which to ship his crop. Picking over cranberries in a warm kitchen in November was a most agreeable task, which as a boy I have many times done in my father's house or for \$1.50 a day in the kitchen of a neighbor.

Some farmers had a few hop vines (perennials) for which they cut each year long pine poles on which the vines ran during the summer often reaching to the very top. When in full bloom, the poles were cut down and stored in the barn. On the first rainy day all took hold to pick the blossoms, which were dried and used in making potato yeast and hop beer, a concoction in which spruce, winter green, liverwort, and sarsaparilla were steeped with the hops. All these ingredients my mother often gathered for the "home brew." This wholesome drink was often brewed and drank by the whole family during the summer months.

The pastures which once fed many cattle are now grown up to wood or underbrush which has greatly changed the face of nature as I remember it. Most farmers made it a business to fatten young cattle, which were sold as beeves in the fall and the profit used in paying the year's taxes. Others fattened oxen during the winter and turned them in the spring for a younger team with which to do the year's work. On every farm, until superseded by the production of milk for city residents, the fattening of calves through the spring and summer months was a real industry as the presence of market men would show. Every farmer had his set of lances, and the day before slaughtering, calves were

carefully bled. The whiteness of veal, which is so much appreciated is brought about by the excessive bleeding of the animal. "The calf pen and the sheep pen" have disappeared from these old farms. There were numerous traders especially in adjoining towns who dealt in cattle and were out among the farmers for the purchase of stock, as follows: Asa Clark, John A. Newell, and Francis Hammett of Medfield, Charles Hartshorn and Horace Draper of Walpole. At an earlier time Jabez Baker, Bula Bullen and George Cleveland were traders of the town. Joseph Fisher of Westwood, Thomas Gould of Natick, and James Kennedy of Dedham, bought and sold horses and traded with the farmers.

Sheep have long since disappeared but some of the numerous places on Charles River, where in the spring of the year, they were washed for shearing, are still pointed out. A good shearer could shear twenty-five sheep a day for which he was paid from seventy-five cents to one dollar. At an earlier time sheep washing was a gala day, liquor was freely used against exposure.

Swine were kept on every farm and as they increase rapidly were found to be a profitable investment. Stone jars of the whitest lard, barrels of the clearest pork, with a good supply of sausage, ham and bacon were found in every farm house. The bacon of that day was the smoked and pickled shoulder and not the thin strips of inferior pork called "bacon" today.

Farmers were interested in the weekly live stock quotations in the "Boston Cultivator", "New England Farmer," and "Ploughman," all of which agricultural papers circulated in Dover. The Wednesday cattle market at Brighton was attended not only by the traders of the town but by the farmers as well, who often took their boys along with them to their great delight and pleasure

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The Brighton market covered a large area which is now built over with houses. This area was divided into pens for swine, sheep, cows, matched oxen, steers, and young cattle, together with horse trading around the large stable in which the horses were housed. The yards on the south of the main street were for eastern cattle, especially those from Maine. Drovers from this section put up at "Skates Tavern," while others stopped at the big "Cattle Fair Hotel" on the other side of the street. The feeding of swine was reduced to a science. In the early morning, to barrels of water which stood in every pen was added shorts and such a quantity of salt as would create the greatest thirst. Troughs were constantly filled with this mixture and every pig was made to drink as much as possible, for every pound thus added was turned into cash when the pig was weighed. Wednesday evenings droves of cattle passed through the town being driven to Rhode Island and points south.

There has been a wonderful improvement in the water supply since my boyhood days, when in time of drought, which seemed to come often, all the water used in my father's family, that of my uncle, Joseph A. Smith, and some of the neighbors, had to be carted from a never failing spring on our farm. Barrels and half hogsheads placed on stone-drays and drawn by oxen were filled with water. To prevent plashing a board was placed on the water and in cold weather half hogsheads were filled at night and allowed to freeze over before transporting. I note windmills, as well as driven wells, which now supply Dover homes.

While carpenters are charging \$12 a day for work on these farms, and clear pine lumber at one time (1920) was selling at \$240 a thousand, the farmers a half century ago did their own carpentry, cut their own timber, on their own land, and had it sawed

at the nearest sawmill which was often but a short distance away. Fortunately there were no portable sawmills in those days. Carpenters in the fifties received \$5 a week, or a dollar for a single day's work. Young men worked in the mills at Charles River Village for \$8 a month and their board; while married men received \$13 a month. These prices held up to the time of the breaking out of the Civil War in 1860.

The few oak trees left standing, companions to those long since cut for ship timber, have largely succumbed to the ravages of insects. The cutting through the year of large quantities of fire wood, lumber, and the burning of charcoal, which found a ready sale in Boston, kept the farmers, who were constantly on the road loaded with ship timber, charcoal, hoops or cord wood with a considerable amount of ready money.

Dover farmers stopped over night at a tavern at the Southend, just across the Roxbury line and from this fact the well known Dover Street in Boston gets its name. Every farmer carried cold victuals and a two-quart runlet filled with new rum from which he frequently quenched his thirst. Some of his neighbors probably stopped for meals with Jonathan Battelle, who had a victualing house in Roxbury. In the Dover Street tavern there was a long hall with beds on either side which accommodated at least forty persons. Here the farmer selected an unoccupied bed, or if there were none unoccupied, turned in with a neighbor (often amid a snoring crowd). In the winter the farmer was up by times (long before daylight) to feed his oxteam and get an early start down town.

Edward W. Grew's house lot, "Juniper Knoll," was a pasture in my boyhood days, which in early summer was blue with low blue berries, which were succeeded by the half high blue berry which lasted into the early fall.



In damp places the swamp blueberry flourished and in many fields the low black berry was found in abundance. Black raspberries, (thimble berries) and high blackberries, not to mention wild strawberries were gathered in large quantities especially where the ground had been burned over the preceding spring. To the gathering of this fruit squads of berry pickers—women and children—came from South Natick. To market this fruit, and other products of the farm, market men having regular days for their Boston trips are recalled as follows: John Harden, North Medfield; Frederick H. Wight, George D. Everett, and Sumner Allen of Dover and earlier Reuben Draper of South Natick. It will readily be seen that this business netted many thousands of dollars in the aggregate to Dover farmers.

Fifty years ago Dover was as well supplied with butcher's carts, baker's carts and fish carts as any of the surrounding towns: the fish dealer also carried a full line of tropical fruits, and announced his arrival by the blowing of a long tin horn which gave rise to the saying "You can't sell fish if you don't blow your horn."

In the virgin soil all kinds of fruit trees flourished. Every farmer had an abundance of black mazard, oxheart and white heart cherries, which ripened in succession and furnished the family with abundance of this healthful and delicious fruit. Peach trees bore with such profusion that a tip-cart load was often gathered from a single tree. Pears were raised for the market and the "Bartlett pear" of those days was never excelled. There was considerable variety in grafted fruit, and sweet apples of which large quantities were raised and sold in the Boston market were grown. Baked sweet apples, eaten with bread and milk, were every where a favorite dish and consumed in large quantities. The genuine "Roxbury russet" was grown

here on tall trees, which made apple picking very hard and difficult. Now farmers set out dwarf trees and pick most of the fruit while standing on the ground. Many farmers kept a barrel of Roxbury russets tightly headed in a dark place in the cellar, or buried in a sand bank, until old election day the last of May, when it was opened for the family and the apples found to be as hard and sound as when gathered in the fall. This was the farmer's cold storage.

Hundreds of bushels of native fruit were gathered in the pastures or cleared fields which were either sold at the mill or made into cider. I remember that my father sold one year more than five hundred bushels of such apples at Holbrook's mill at South Sherborn, which I had helped to gather. The making of cider vinegar was a business on many farms. The fact that there were 12 cider mills in town, with others just across the line in Medfield, Sherborn, and Natick shows the value of the apple crop in those early days. Henry Goulding made large quantities of vinegar which he stored in casks on long stringers in the open air. The wit of Hiram W. Jones is recalled who after calling on Mr. Goulding remarked that he had the largest vinegar plant he had ever seen, that it was all out doors."

On my father's farm (and this was generally true throughout the town) every plow, cultivator, hoe, or spade was carefully cleaned and put under cover at night. The mowing machine was housed and nothing of iron or steel construction was left in the field to rust out.

Dealers in agricultural implements tell us that the hard lot of the Western farmer is greatly aggravated by the practice of leaving unhoused the tools used in their work and so frequent renewals at large expense are required.

Haying always commenced immediately after the Fourth of July, and

with the cutting of the river meadows, often extended into September. Preparatory to haying the road was mown out and not a vine or shrub was left standing. The roadside was carefully raked and all that was not good for fodder or bedding was carefully burned.

As my father's farm extended for a third of a mile on both sides of Smith street, which was originally cut through the farm, it was no small task to mow the road out, a job which I am sorry to see is now left undone and the roadside is allowed to grow up to wood. Previous to the purchase of mowing machines in the early sixties, all mowing, spreading of the grass to dry, raking, pitching on in the field, and storing away in the barn, was done by hand. While my father was milking the cows in the morning the hired man did 2 hours mowing in the field before my mother's 6 o'clock breakfast was ready. Some farmers dropped an egg into a glass of cider which they drank before mowing in the morning. Supper was at 5 o'clock, and in haying time, scythes were ground after supper for an early start in the morning. The hay crop, now neglected, was an important crop and enough hay was often sold to pay the year's taxes and no small part of the cost of the family groceries..

In the vegetable garden of today I do not find the variety of vegetables that were once grown on Dover farms. There were not only green corn, which was first raised on these farms by the Indians, but peas, beans, a variety of greens (which included beet greens, mustard, pigweed, dock and parley,) cabbage, parsnip (grown from seed gathered from the best specimens of wild parsnip growing by the road side) carrots, lettuce, onions (often roasted in the winter for the cure of colds) radish, beets, (grown for the weekly codfish dinner) cucumbers, a great variety of squashes of which the crook-

neck had great keeping qualities, beans tomatoes (at first called love apples) turnips, including the rutabagas and the Swede varieties, citron, musk-melons, and water melons. Seeds for all this variety of vegetables were carefully saved from the best specimens of the year, and those which had varied in the direction of some desired excellence. At planting time the seed of not one of this large variety of vegetables was wanting, or had to be purchased at the village store. All seeds were carefully saved and stored in the "seed box" and exchanges were often made with neighbors, when the value of a new variety had been established.

Economy was practiced in the corn field. At the first hoeing all miss hills—where the corn had failed to come up—were planted to beans; at the second hoeing a liberal quantity of pumpkin seeds were planted in the hills with the corn and at the last hoeing turnip seed was sown broadcast. In the fall the beans were carefully pulled and stacked to dry. After the corn was removed in the fall the ground was literally yellow with pumpkins, and later an abundant crop of turnips was gathered, all of which was in addition to a heavy crop of corn. The turnips and pumpkins were carefully housed and used in stock feeding as long as they could be kept from freezing in the cold barns of that day. Rings of pumpkins for winter use were cut and dried in the sun by the housewife the practice having been learned from the Indians.

Never having had a sister I do not know all the ways the girls had of earning spending money. Women of most families added substantially to their income by sewing straw hats or bonnets, the material for which was put out by the Medfield Straw Works. A wagon, especially built for the purpose covered the territory each week, during the winter and spring, putting out many thousand yards of

straw braid which was returned in hand-made hats and bonnets.

An exceptinoally smart sewer was employed by D. D. Curtis Co. of Medfield, at the opening each season, and her pace in sewing hats and bonnets, of the different kinds of straw, was set for all sewers and the price fixed accordingly.

Many a housewife earned a hundred and fifty dollars in a season and when joined by daughters, the family income was greatly increased. How often have I seen Mrs. Eudora Shumway Sawin at this work, and I have no doubt the money earned in this way went to the Dover Historical Society, as Mrs. Sawin, with her husband, was a founder of the Sawin Memorial.

I know perfectly well how the boys got money for the Fourth of July, picnics and cattle shows, including the performance of Prof. Harrington, the ventriloquist, who made yearly visits to the surrounding towns to the great delight of the boys.

Some interesting facts have recently been established with thirty-five boys and thirty-five girls in a Boston high school, showing how much and how the average child of hard working fathers and mothers spend their money today. The canvass shows that the average high school girl in the district spent \$4.15 weekly while the boys spent \$2.53. This money was spent by the boys and girls for telephone, carfares, soda and ice cream, candy and gum, cigarettes, movies and theatres, dances and lunches. In addition to the above the girls spent for hair dressing and for face powder, while the boys spent for ball games and pool and bowling.

This is quite in contrast with the expenditures of the boys in my youth, some of whom I recall as gathering pond lilies and selling them in Boston on the Fourth of July.

The late Samuel G. Chickering, who left the income of more than

\$650,000, for the support of hospitals did this as a boy more than 70 years ago. Popcorn was raised by the boys, especially after the rice variety was introduced and sold to the grocers in the vicinity in order to get a little spending money. They gathered the yellow cowslips (marsh marigold, the spring) and gave them to their mothers, or sold them to those who wanted to purchase greens. Older boys had been known to take an axe to school and during the noon hour cut cord wood. In this way they earned considerable money during the winter term of school. I recall that Charles H. Chickering, father of the present town moderator did this one winter.

Some boys picked strawberries in their season, for the farmers who engaged in strawberry culture. At that time strawberries were sold in full quart boxes and every berry was hulled as it was picked from the vine. I have myself picked two bushels of strawberries a day and hulled every one. Boys had an opportunity to earn money by picking peas for those farmers who raised them for the Boston market. The pickers were paid so much a bushel for their work.

Excursions for gathering wild grapes and barberries in the fall were of especial interest to boys and both products found a ready sale.

Boys picked berries covering the succession of low blueberries of June to the high blackberries of September. Chestnuts were gathered in the fall and for three dollars some boys built the fire in the district school house during the winter term of fourteen weeks; others pumped the church organ for five dollars a year. They sold butternuts gathered from trees used at an earlier time in dyeing homespun.

In the fall the boys picked cranberries after the rake and often gathered a barrel of the fruit which they sold and used the money in the purchase of winter clothes.

In the spring cranberries, which had dropped from the vines, were floated to the meadow's edge by the spring floods and as the water receded were gathered by the boys and sold, or used by their mothers in making the best cranberry turnovers, that any boy ever ate. In the fall they trapped the rabbit, partridge, and muskrat. At wood auctions the boys carried the flag and stood on the corner of the lot announcing "here a corner." The boys hardly needed the favorite training of today. We teach our boys, says a recent writer, to delve, trade, contract and amass fortunes, deeming it success if they know how to make money and our girls how to spend it faster than the girls of any other country in the world.

As the autos of the town go out at evening to take residents to the movies in Needham, Natick or Dedham, the question naturally arises, how did the residents of the town in the years long past meet the necessity for entertainment. Today millions and millions of people get their sole amusement in motion pictures. Kitchen dances were common from the first for dancing was an art which our fathers brought with them.

When John Williams became proprietor, in 1799, of the Dover Tavern he added a dance hall where through the fall and winter months frequent balls were held. A very common and popular ball was given the night before Thanksgiving. A turkey supper was served and there was never a lack of attendance.

With the building of the Town Hall in 1880 frequent dancing parties were organized which were held through the year.

Serenades were not uncommon especially when a bachelor married. The first time my brother and I remained out until 3 o'clock in the morning was on the occasion of the serenade to Mr. and Mrs. Asa Clark, the bridegroom being a bachelor of fifty years.

The women took great delight in plants and shrubs and flowers. The love and culture of flowers is a sure sign of refinement of mind. I love to recall the many homes in the town where the women had flower gardens and blooming shrubs, which furnished a succession of blossoms from early spring until late fall. In the south windows of living rooms, petunias, geraniums and other flowers bloomed through the long winter and spring, adding life and beauty to almost every Dover home.

Card playing was enjoyed by most families. In my own home, carrying out the custom of the Puritans, no card playing was allowed on Saturday night—it was too near Sunday, in fact at an earlier time Sunday had already commenced. All cards were put away on Fast Day, not to be taken out again until fall. Fox and geese was played by all, but, dominos and checkers were forbidden in many homes.

Sunday School picnics, town picnics and neighborhood picnics were common occurrences and were enjoyed by all. The picnics of the First Parish, always held in Sawin's grove—now the home of Mr. Sidney Bartlett—was always looked forward to with the keenest delight. Some picnics were held in "Celebration Woods" at the corner of Centre and Haven streets.

The Medfield Brass Band, of which a goodly number of Dover men were members, furnished the music. The whistle of the incoming train, which in those days ran no further than Dover, was of more attraction than the brass band, and all the boys ran to see the train come in. The huge smokestack and the wood piled high on the tender are recalled after nearly sixty years.

While one can hardly see a child today who hasn't an ice cream cone in his hand, yet it is well to remember that ice cream freezers were not in use before the late fifties. The first ice cream made in Dover was

on the occasion of the celebration of the opening of the Air Line Railroad, July 4, 1860, when Mrs. John W. Howe of Newton brought her freezer and made ice cream for the Howe family and their friends. This was the first ice cream I ever ate.

Out of town picnics were often held at Farm pond in Sherborn, and at Curtis Grove, Medfield. With the passing of the muster came the "Cornwallis" which was held in Natick and was of surpassing interest to old and young. Auction sales in this and adjoining towns were always attended by the men and boys. If a large sale, the auction commenced at 10 o'clock in the morning and at noon everybody was fed. Barrels of crackers were opened, big cheeses cut up, and washboilers full of steaming coffee was served. James Tisdale was a famous auctioneer of his day, and no one had a larger following; his services were in demand as far south as Rhode Island. His ability was inherited by his descendants in each generation and his grandson, Alfred B. Tisdale, continued selling at auction in Dover, Medfield, Walpole and Dedham until over 80 years of age. Van Amberg's menagerie came along about 1860, and with its successors has never failed to show in Natick through all the years. When the menagerie traveled over the road, it sometimes passed through Dover, and at such times the boys were up by 3 o'clock in the morning to see it pass and get a sight at camels and elephants without charge. When P. T. Barnum introduced "Tom Thumb" to the public, the Dover women, who saw the midget, never tired of talking about him and comparing him in height with their own children.

Potter, the sleight of hand performer, gave exhibitions in town and was followed by Harrington the ventriloquist. Traveling shows with lantern slides sometimes exhibited in the school houses of the town. In

the absence of a town hall, campaign rallies with flag raisings were not held as early as in many towns. At first, political rallies were held out of doors, when flags of either party were flung to the breeze.

There has been great elevation in the tone of the speaking at political meetings. I have heard women say that the stories told at such gatherings forty years ago made them blush. Before the building of the Town Hall, the Meeting house of the First Parish (making it as in the early history of the Parish a meeting house in fact) was used for political meetings. Good order prevailed and not a word was uttered that was not in perfect propriety. In 1894, during the presidential campaign, the Democrats of the town flung a flag across Springdale Ave. opposite the churches, bearing the name of Grover Cleveland. No larger or more beautiful flag could be found in the County. Political feeling ran high for many years. I have heard Republican women say they would rather go a mile round than walk under a flag bearing the name of a Democratic candidate.

The Sunday service was of great interest to women and girls, giving them an opportunity to meet neighbors and friends. After the organization of the Baptist Church in 1837, young people from the First Parish I am told often dropped in to the afternoon service of the Society, especially if a baptism was to be held in Charles River, all of which was a change from the regular round of their lives. The Ladies' Benevolent Society met monthly in the homes of members of the First Parish and made quilts and fancy articles for the annual fair which was held for many years in Noanet Hall at Dover Mills. This fair was largely attended and was a looked for event by people in this and neighboring towns. Tickets for the "guess cake" and "ring cake" were in demand but the greater

contest was over the bed quilt, sold by lottery. Erastus Gay of West Dedham through the years was often the winner. The grab bag was of never failing interest to the youngsters who were in attendance in the afternoon. Sunday afternoon sings in the Meeting-house were largely attended and it was on one of these occasions in 1839 that the beautiful Colonial Meeting-house of the First Parish was burned. Literary Societies having definite functions have existed from time to time. Lectures on Lectures on health, Woman's rights, temperance and kindred subjects were held throughot the year. The Lyceum of the town met in the school houses and the subjects discussed by Henry Wilson the Natick cobbler, and other men of note were of special interest.

Forty years ago or so the Chautauqua Reading Circle with its all the year round course had its members here. This course included the reading of a monthly magazine and books on science, art, literature and history. Miss Amy Sullivan, (Mrs. J. W. Higgins) was the first person to complete the course in Dover. The old-fashioned Chautauqua has disappeared, yet its spirit remains and its leaders today are engaged in an out of doors enlightenment, through an institution, behind which are the best thought and spirit of the community.

Courses of lectures at Natick and Medfield were attended by residents of the town during the winter months. The most popular lecturers in the country appeared on the Natick platform. I recall hearing Wendell Philips in the Medfield Course and Henry Ward Beecher at Natick. Women did much afternon visiting during the winter and early spring. At such times a fire was kindled in the best room, which under ordinary circumstances was used only for weddings and funerals. The best china was brought out and a bountiful supper was served. In the evening the husbands came in and with apples and a

plenty of good cider the time was passed. Every home had its quilting frame and quiltings were not uncommon. A musical Society, in the south part of the town, furnished much pleasure and entertainment for many years. Singing schools were held in the school houses or in the Baptist Chapel during the winter months of most years. Perhaps the last singing school (taught by Dr. Porter) was held in the West School-house. From early winter until Fast Day, frequent balls were held at the Williams Tavern, which were attended by many young men and women from this and neighboring towns. Nathaniel P. Banks, afterwards Governor of the State; Speaker of the National House of Representatives, and a General in the Union Army in the Civil War, attended balls here. Aaron Miller (for whom Miller Hill was named) was a noted violinist and furnished the music for such occasions. The Williams Tavern had the reputation of furnishing the best ball supper in the county.

On the occasion of the Cattle Show of the Norfolk Agricultural Society at Dedham (or the South Middlesex at Framingham) each of which drew from a radius of about 15 miles, while today in automobiles persons go several hundred miles to such shows, the town was nearly deserted. Every member of the family found something of real interest in these annual fairs, which were conducted by farmers for farmers and with the co-operation of farmers. They went to see the yellow honey and the golden butter and the prize embroidery and the reddest apple, the biggest potatoes, the most succulent melons, the fattest steers, wooliest sheep, the proudest roosters, and the noblest horses.

The farmers of the time were interested in the horse show, live stock show, farm machinery and domestic machinery. This was the beginning of the use of power farming.

The young people of the town enjoyed sleigh rides which included a turkey supper at some hostelry. Perhaps the favorite ride was through the Newtons to Brighton where a supper was served at the Cattle Fair Hotel. After the opening of the railroad young people on the Fourth of July went into Boston to see the fireworks on Boston Common. Fishing was always in order and many "fishing holes" in Charles river, where hornpouts were sure to bit, were known. Ice fishing was great fun and all the necessary traps were found on many farms of the town. Farm pond at Sherborn was the favorite fishing ground. The boys who lived near Charles river enjoyed boating. While baseball had not been introduced, round ball and "hilly over" were favorite games on school grounds.

Those who kept hounds engaged in fox hunting; they followed the real thing not the anise bag.

Dover farmers being much on the road and often stopping over night in Boston were early patrons of the theatre. For twenty-five cents a balcony seat could be purchased and a play enjoyed. After haying residents often made excursions to Gloucester and suffered attacks of sea sickness which were long remembered. Excursions for bathing were made to Squantum.

Children were numerous and at home in every house, barn or shed within a mile. They especially enjoyed coasting, skating and snowballing. The boys made elder pop-guns, which made a ringing report.

They set figure four traps for squirrels and box traps for rabbits. They made windmills, weather vanes and little water wheels that went in the brooks. In imitation of archers they made bows and arrows. Some will remember the years before lawn tennis was born when everybody played croquet.

Raisings were not uncommon and at such times all the men and boys of the district turned out to assist

and enjoy the comradeship of their neighbors. In the winter time spelling matches were held in the District schoolhouses. Sometimes the pupils of one District challenged the pupils of another District to see which could spell the other down.

At the close of the winter term of school a public examination was held. In oral recitations, songs, dialogues and declamations the pupils exhibited their ability. Members of the school committee were present with parents and friends who filled the little schoolhouses to the doors. I had my first pair of rubber boots when 16 years of age. With the melting of the first snow, I had wet feet until the ways were settled in the spring.

During the winter my cowhide boots were greased with mutton tallow and set to dry over night by the open fire or the kitchen stove. For my red-topped copper-toed boots my father usually took me to Isaac Fiske's store at Medfield, or George Clark's store at Sherborn. Having selected the size or number, the pegs were removed on a stationary rasp which was attached to the counter, and if some remembered when the boot was tried on they were removed by a hand rasp made for the purpose.

With the harvest moon came the husking party which was especially enjoyed by the young men and the maidens. After the pile of husked corn had been heaped high, all were invited into the house to partake of a most bountiful supper consisting of baked beans and a great variety of pies and cakes. The real New England pumpkin pie was most in demand.

After about 1860, Christmas celebrations were held in the churches and schoolhouses with well laden trees. I well remember my first Christmas present, a little China soap dish given me in 1859 by my Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Barker, wife of the minister of the First Parish Church. My next Christmas gift was a box of paints hung on the

Christmas tree in the West Schoolhouse, when the school was taught by Miss Lizzie Dowse, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Edmund Dowse of Sherborn, for so many years the chaplain of the Mass. Senate. It was many years afterwards when Christmas wreaths were first used for decorative purposes in Dover homes and later made for sale.

It was long a custom to exchange presents on New Year's day and in New England the day has been much longer observed than Christmas. New Year's is the World's oldest Holiday of which gift giving has been a feature. January 1st has been kept as New Year by all civilized people since 1752. The young folks, especially the boys, got great fun out of skating. With the opening of the winter school, the first Monday after Thanksgiving, the boys of the West School dammed Fisher Brook and flowed the meadow of Bradford Curtis, making a skating pond. Here when the skating was good, the little pond was literally black, during the noon hour, with the pupils of the school. Here on moonlight nights was held many a skating party.

Coasting was a pastime in which both the boys and girls engaged. Starting at the top of the hill at Farm and Wight streets, the double runners with their human freight sped along Farm street past the house of Noah Fiske, and down the long hill, over Fisher Brook, and half way up the hill opposite Juniper Knoll.

There is nothing enumerated in this list of farm amusements and forms of entertainment that were not participated in by the boys and girls of the town in the years succeeding the stage coach, the spinning wheel and the tallow candle.

Dover boys had a wider acquaintance, with the surrounding country than those of many other towns. My father always took one of his boys with him whenever called from home on business. In this way I was made familiar with not only Boston, Brigh-

ton, Cambridge, Watetown, Newton and Roxbury, but with the surrounding towns as well—Natick, Wayland, Holliston, Sherborn, Framingham, Medway, Medfield, Walpole, Dedham, Needham, Brookline, West Roxbury and the territory since incorporated as Wellesley, Millis, and Westwood.

I knew every church, school and place of historic interest in the whole territory. Dover in all the years since its separation from the mother town has never had especially intimate relations with Dedham. The situation is not explained by the topography of the country alone.

Through many years the residents of what later became the Springfield Parish were forced to attend church at Dedham, although in so doing some had to travel more than twenty miles. Bearing this in mind we may trace a feeling of prejudice which existed at least through the early years of the town. We find residents turning to other adjoining towns rather than to Dedham for many things, except official County business which had to be transacted at the County seat.

This spirit, however, was not as manifest in the East part of the town where the farmers, in going to Boston, drove to Dedham and put their horses in the sheds of the First Parish Church, where they remained, unmolested, until their return in the late afternoon when they drove home.

Regarding fraternal organizations, residents of Dover were members of the masonic order before the Revolution; followed by Odd Fellowship, Good Templars and Patrons of Husbandry, all of which helped the members to break the monotony of farm life.

Today what a change has come over the people! In the Dempsey fight (1923) the editor of the Christian Science Monitor took the trouble to measure by inches the space given to the Dempsey fight and to the meeting of the National Educational Association, which were in



session at the same time. The editor was shocked to find that the space given to Dempsey beat the Educational Meeting about a thousand to one; to which an editor replied:—For every person in the United States that would have paid ten cents to attend the educational meeting, a thousand would have paid \$50 to see the prize fight. In the fight which was held in New York on Sept. 14, 1923, more than 92,000 saw Dempsey knock out Firpo and the audience was only limited by the capacity of the polo grounds. The gate receipts as officially announced were \$1,350,000. In all the history of fighting there has never been two such rounds of fist fighting, which means such brutality. How would the Dover of today measure up in its interest in such events?

On Sunday all went to church to gain that goodness which the descendants of the Puritans sought and on Monday morning every housewife did the family washing for cleanliness was believed to be next to godliness. I can remember when with the exception of a few side pews every seat in the First Parish Meeting-house was occupied and often two or three families used the same pew. Two long rows of horsesheds were filled with horses and carriages, and on pleasant Sundays many horses were tied outside. In 1865 the Rev. Mr. Bailey of the Dedham Church, in exchanging with the Rev. George Proctor, expressed his astonishment at the size of the congregation in the Dover meeting-house and wondered where the people had all come from. Taking the population of the town into consideration the Sunday School of the First Parish was one of the largest in the denomination. On a Sunday afternoon last summer, I saw more people on the ball-grounds at Caryl Park than were numbered in the congregations of the churches of the town on that Sunday morning.

While the farmers of the period which we have considered had to be economical, I very much doubt if they found it as hard to gain a livelihood as the average citizen of today, who, living under a more advanced civilization ought to gain a more abundant life. I know the residents of that day had more leisure. Each served in turn as the prudential school committeeman in the district in which he lived. Each served as the highway surveyor and had the satisfaction at least of keeping the road in good condition near his own house, and had the opportunity of earning something in working out the tax of non-residents of the district. Before the appointment of a superintendent of streets, on a day set apart, all the able bodied men in the district, having been previously warned by the surveyor, gathered with their ox-teams to work out their highway tax. Very vividly in my mind's eye I see them now as they assembled at 7 o'clock in the morning to engage in this work. Of all that number not one now remains.

At first, town officers served without compensation, but later received a small fee. George Chickering served as town treasurer for \$5 a year and felt that he was well paid. The office of School Committee, which for a century and a half was held without compensation, is now a paid office. The office of Moderator, which has existed here from the earliest meetings held in the little school-house on Haven Street as early as 1728 to the present time, and which it was always an honor to hold, is with others a paid office today. So I might go on, but it is not necessary—the life that is lived in this old New England town today is not the life that was lived here a half century ago. As Henry Van Dyke has said—"Private joys grow rare and difficult and even the capacity for them seems to be withering, at least in two extremes of human society,

where the home wears a vanishing aspect."

NOTE:—At Thanksgiving we had mince pie, pumpkin pie, squash pie, apple pie, cranberry pie and custard pie. During the year it is within bounds to say that the old resourceful Dover housewives, when pie for breakfast was an honorable tradition, made twenty other pies, as follows: Cranberry tart pie, stewed apple pie,

dried apple pie, apple tart pie, cherry pie, mulberry pie, blueberry pie, huckleberry pie, blackberry pie, raspberry pie, peach pie, currant pie, gooseberry pie, elderberry pie, cream pie, sour-milk pie, lemon pie, strawberry pie, rhubarb pie, and Washington pie, with a variety of fillings.

Dover, Massachusetts  
March 23, 1930

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